

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6570

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

CDR JCRC NKP

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: LEAGUE OF FAMILIES CONVERSATION WITH LPF PERMREP SOTH
PHETRASY

REF: (A) STATE 221632

(B) VIENTIANE 7360 (NOTAL)

1. VERBATIM TEXT OF LEAGUE TRANSCRIPT OF OCTOBER 19 MEETING WITH LPF PERMREP SOTH PHETRASY, REQUESTED BY REF A, IS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPHS 3 THROUGH 26. ORIGINAL NOTES (PROVIDED TO MISSION BY GEORGE BROOKS) BEING POUCHED TODAY (NOVEMBER 12). ("DR. ROTH" MENTIONED IN TEXT IS ACTUALLY REVEREND ROFFE.)

2. IN REFERENCE TO SOTH'S STATEMENT MARKED BY ASTERISK IN PARAGRAPH SIX, SOTH EVIDENTLY MEANT TO EMPHASIZE POINT THAT LPF WAS NOT BOUND TO PW RELEASE SCHEDULE OF THE JANUARY PARIS AGREEMENT ON THE VIETNAM WAR; HENCE, LPF COULD HAVE HELD THE TEN US PWS CAPTURED IN LAOS UNTIL CONDITIONS OUTLINED IN FEBRUARY 21 VIENTIANE AGREEMENT WERE FULFILLED.

3. BEGIN TEXT OF TRANSCRIPT: QUOTE - MEETING WITH SOTH PHETRASY - OCTOBER 19, 1973 - BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF
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FAMILIES OF PRISONERS AND MEN MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (REPRE-

SENTATIVES: MR. GEORGE BROOKS, MRS. BARBARA LEWIS, MRS. HELEN SADLER).

4. QUOTE - WE ARRIVED AT THE PATHET LAO HEADQUARTERS AT 1500. (THE GUARD AT THE GATE PRESENTED ARMS; THEREFORE, IT WAS APPARENT THAT WE WERE EXPECTED.) AS WE STEPPED OUT OF OUR CAR, WE WERE GREETED BY AN AIDE WHO ASKED US INTO A LARGE RECEPTION ROOM. VERY SHORTLY, SOTH CAME IN AND GREETED US QUITE WARMLY. HE ASKED US TO BE SEATED AND INITIATED THE CONVERSATION.

5. QUOTE - SOTH APOLOGIZED FOR THE DELAY IN MEETING WITH US AND WANTED TO KNOW OUR OFFICIAL TITLE. WE EXPLAINED ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION AND THE PURPOSE OF OUR TRIP. OUR REPLY WAS, THAT WE WERE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES OF PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. WE HAD BEEN VERY PLEASED THAT THE PROTOCOL HAD BEEN SIGNED AND THAT WE (A WIFE, A MOTHER, A FATHER) WERE REPRESENTING THE 53 FAMILIES WHO CAME TO VIENTIANE ON BEHALF OF ALL MEN WHO ARE MISSING. GEORGE BROOKS ADDED THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN ANY INFORMATION ON THESE MEN THAT ARE MISSING.

6. QUOTE - BARBARA LEWIS TOLD SOTH THAT THE REASON THAT WE WERE HERE AT THIS TIME WAS TO WAIT FOR THE LIST TO BE RELEASED OF ALL PERSONS HELD IN CAPTIVITY AND THOSE WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY. SOTH REPLIED THAT WITH THE AGREEMENTS IN FEBRUARY, THEY (THE PATHET LAO) HAD RELEASED THE PRISONERS THEY HELD. (THIS WAS SOMEWHAT CONFUSING - POSSIBLE DR. ROTH COULD CLARIFY) AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. (HE SEEMED TO BE CLAIMING THESE WERE PRISONERS HE SHOULD RELEASE NOW.) HE SAID THAT ONE MAN DISREGARDED (THE CEASEFIRE) AND PARACHUTED IN THEIR AREA IN AN EFFORT TO GET OUT SOME MEN. HE SAID THIS MAN - GATE - (MEANING EMMET KAY) IS THE ONLY ONE HE HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THAT IS HELD.

7. QUOTE - GEORGE BROOKS STATED THAT WE WOULD LIKE INFORMATION ON THESE MEN BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME FOR THE FAMILIES. HE SAID MANY YOUNG WIVES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR HUSBANDS SO THEY CAN GO ON WITH THEIR LIVES. HE ALSO STATED THAT WE REALIZE SOME MAY BE DEAD, BUT, IF SO, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THEIR BODIES RETURNED FOR A PROPER BURIAL.

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8. QUOTE - AFTER A LONG DISCUSSION BETWEEN SOTH AND DR. ROTH, IN SUMMARY, DR. ROTH SAID SOTH HAD STATED THAT HE THOROUGHLY UNDERSTANDS OUR SITUATION BECAUSE HE UNDERSTANDS THE LAWS OF HIS COUNTRY AND ALSO THE LAWS OF INHERITANCE AND THINGS OF THIS NATURE IN OUR COUNTRY. HE SAID HE AND HIS FAMILY WERE IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THIS COUNTRY - FLEEING FROM ONE AREA TO ANOTHER. HE SAID HE HAD LOST ONE OR ANOTHER OF HIS FAMILY. HE MADE THE STATEMENT THAT HE HAD NO

KNOWLEDGE OF MEN TAKEN IN LAOS ITSELF, BUT THAT SIXTY DAYS AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE COALITION A LIST WOULD BE AVAILABLE.

9. QUOTE - SOTH STATED THAT SOME MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIT ON ONE SIDE AND GLIDED ACROSS THE BORDER. THE LACK OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION IS DUE TO MANY THINGS AND VERY CONFUSING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO GET INFORMATION AS LONG AS FIGHTING GOES ON.

10. QUOTE - BARBARA LEWIS ASKED, IN VIEW OF MAY REPORTS IN THE PAST OF PRISONERS BEING HELD, IF HE HAD ANY KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THESE MEN.

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11. QUOTE - SOTH REPLIED THAT HE PERSONALLY KNEW OF NO ONE BEING HELD AT THIS TIME. THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF PLANES SHOT DOWN, SOME FLOWN BY AMERICANS, SOME BY LAO, SOME BY THAIS FROM MANY DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS AND IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO TELL WHICH WAS WHICH IN IDENTIFYING PLANES AND PEOPLE. THESE PLANES WERE DESTROYED IN DIFFERENT WAYS -- SOME MEN PARACHUTED AND THE PLANE CRASHED, OTHERS CRASHED WITH NO POSSIBLE MEANS OF SURVIVAL. SOME WOULD BE DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO IDENTIFY. HE ALSO HAD SEEN MUCH IN THE MEDIA. HE, HIMSELF, HAS SPENT THE LAST TEN YEARS IN VIENTIANE, OUT OF PERSONAL TOUCH WITH HIS PEOPLE SO COULD HAVE NO PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE. WHEN THESE PILOTS SURVIVED AND REACHED INHABITED AREAS, THEY COULD BE HELD AND TAKEN CARE OF

ACCORDING TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTURE UNDER CONDITIONS OF THE WAY THE PEOPLE LIVED (AND THIS WOULD NOT BE IN THE WAY THEY WERE ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING). HE SAID HE COULD ASSURE US THAT THEY WOULD BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF. BECAUSE OF THE REMOTE AREAS AND ROUGH TERRAIN, THEY COULD BE HELD WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE. AS FAR AS HE KNOWS, HOWEVER, THE LIVING HAVE BEEN RELEASED. HE EXPRESSED HIS UTMOST SYMPATHY AND SAID WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AGREEMENTS ARE IMPLEMENTED. IT IS ONLY THEN THAT TEAMS CAN START WORKING TO SECURE INFORMATION. (HE DID NOT ANSWER QUESTION.)

12. QUOTE - GEORGE BROOKS ASKED IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE CAN DO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO HELP OUR MEN. SOTH REPLIED THAT IF THE ROYAL LAO AND PATHET LAO CANNOT COME TO AGREEMENT, THEY CAN GO TO ICC FOR HELP.

13. QUOTE - GEORGE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW OF ANY THING THE FAMILIES COULD DO BUT THE FAMILIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MEN AND WANT TO DO EVERYTHING POEPIBLE. SOTH SAID HE WOULD REMEMBER THE OFFER. IT IS HIS OPINION THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO DEPEND ON THE RURAL POPULATION FOR INFORMATION. TO IMPLEMENT THIS, TEAMS WILL HAVE TO GET OUT INTO THE AREAS.

14. QUOTE - BARBARA ASKED IF AND WHEN THE COALITON GOVERNMENT IS FORMED, CAN WE EXPECT ALL PRISONERS TO BE RELEASED AND THE MISSING ACCOUNTED FOR. SOTH REPLIED THAT HE GUARANTEED ALL PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED REGARDLESS OF RACE. HE ADDED, 'I SAY THIS IN COMPLETE SINCERITY.' BOTH SIDES WILL FULLY RESPECT BOTH SIDES OF THE AGREEMENT. THE INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENS, SOVEREIGNTY OF NATIONS AND FACTORS OF THE DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE WOULD BE RESPECTED. THEY WOULD RESPECT ALL PARTS OF THE AGREEMENT.

15. QUOTE - BARBARA STATED THAT WE HAVE HIGHLY-SKILLED TEAMS TRAINED TO SEARRCH CRASH SITES AND AREAS. THEY DO THIS IN A STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN BASIS. WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR THEM PERHAPS TO AID THEIR TEAMS IN SEARCHES? SOTH SAID THIS WAS NOT IN HIS CAPACITY TO MAKE SUCH A DECISION.

16. QUOTE - HELEN STATED OUR PEOPLE ARE VERY PROUD THE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN SIGNED AND ARE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT.

17. QUOTE - SOTH EXPRESSED THANKS FOR AMERICA HELP IN STOPPING THE HOSTILITIES. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS SURE GOD AND THE LORD HAD A HAND IN CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES AND SIGNING OF AGREEMENTS. HE IS GRATEFUL WE SHARE HIS SENTIMENTS ON AGREEMENTS AND HOPE THAT THERE WILL BE NO REPETITION OF HOSTILITIES IN THE FUTURE. LAOS IS A VERY SMALL COUNTRY AND HAS BEEN TORN BY DISCORDS FOR MANY YEARS.

18. QUOTE - BARBARA STATED THAT WE HAVE GREAT FAITH IN GOD, TOO, THAT IT IS HER FAITH IN GOD THAT BROUGHT HER TO THIS COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF HER HUSBAND. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THERE IS PEACE IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YOUR COUNTRY AS WELL AS FOR OUR OWN. SHE SAID THAT SHE HAD THREE CHILDREN AND SHE WOULD LIKE FOR THEM TO LIVE IN A TIME OF PEACE.

19. QUOTE - SOTH SAID HE SHARED THESE FEELINGS. SINCE HIS EARLY TWENTIES, HE HAS KNOWN WAR AND HOPES THAT IN HIS LIFETIME NOW HE WILL KNOW PEACE.

20. QUOTE - HELEN SAID THAT, 'TOMORROW IS OUR SON'S 30TH BIRTHDAY AND I FEEL THAT NOW I CAN GO HOME TO MY FAMILY WITH A BETTER FEELING BECAUSE WE COULD SIT DOWN AND TALK.'

21. QUOTE - SOTH SAID THAT HIS PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED MANY YEARS AND IT WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BUT THEY WILL PUT IT BEHIND THEM. HE HOPES WE WILL CONTINUE TO CALL ON THE LORD FOR PEACE SO THERE WILL BE NO RESURGENCE OF HOSTILITIES, NO MORE SORROWS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD KEEP HIS HANDS ON THESE THINGS. HE GAVE HIS WARM-EST GOOD WISHES AS WE RETURN TO OUR HOMES.

22. QUOTE - GEORGE SAID HE WAS NOT A WEALTHY MAN, BUT WOULD RETURN IMMEDIATELY IF HE COULD HELP IN ANY WAY IN ACCOUNTING FOR OUR MEN AND RETURNING THEM TO THEIR HOMES. HE OFFERED HIS CARD TO SOTH, WHO ACCEPTED IT.

23. QUOTE - BARBARA ASKED, IN VIEW OF HIS STATEMENT OF BEING OUT OF TOUCH WITH HIS PEOPLE IN OTHER AREAS, IF HE KNEW IF RECORDS HAD BEEN KEPT THAT HE MIGHT NOT HAVE ABOUT CRASHES AND MEN. SOTH SAID THAT THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD TELL US - THAT WE WOULD SEE NEWS IN THE MEDIA AND OTHER SOURCES.

24. QUOTE - HELEN ASKED IF WE COULD TAKE PICTURES AND THREE WERE TAKEN OF THE GROUP.

25. QUOTE - BARBARA ASKED DR. ROTH TO EXPRESS OUR THANKS TO SOTH AND OUR WISH FOR SUCCESS IN THE COALITION AND PEACE FOR THIS COUNTRY.

26. QUOTE - THE MEETING WAS OVER AT 1620 HOURS. SOTH WALKED OUT THE DOOR WITH THE GROUP AND STOOD ON THE STEPS AND WAVED AS THE CAR LEFT.

FOOTNOTE: ASTERISK INDICATES CONFUSION ABOUT TRANSLATION. CHECK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH DR. ROTH AND PERHAPS HE CAN CLARIFY.

UNQUOTE - END OF TEXT OF TRANSCRIPT.
WHITEHOUSE

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